

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

1-21. (Canceled)

22. (Previously Presented) A data conversion apparatus for use with an external recording apparatus and an external equipment, and for use in converting data including audio contents to superdistribution format data and outputting the superdistribution format data to be supplied to the external recording apparatus to be recorded therein,

said superdistribution format data including said audio contents and attribute information which represents at least a charge condition permitting creation of a copy of the audio contents, and including identification information identifying a user of the data conversion apparatus,

said data conversion apparatus comprising:

a data transmission/receiving section for transmitting and receiving data to and from the external equipment;

a data format judging section for judging whether or not data received by said data transmission/receiving section is of a superdistribution format;

an attribute information obtaining section for identifying the audio contents of the data and obtaining attribute information corresponding to the identified audio contents from the external equipment via said data transmission/receiving section;

a user ID storage section storing the identification information identifying the user of the data conversion apparatus;

a ciphering section ciphering the attribute information obtained from the external equipment and the identification information stored in said user ID storage section;

a data format conversion section adding said ciphered attribute information and identification information to the audio contents and thereby converting the audio contents together with the obtained attribute information to the superdistribution data format; and

a controller for controlling said data transmission/receiving section, data format judging section, attribute information obtaining section and data format conversion section,

wherein, in a case where said data format judging section judges that the received data is not of the superdistribution format, said controller controls said attribute information obtaining section so as to obtain the attribute information corresponding to the audio contents from the external equipment, and wherein said controller controls said data format conversion section so as to convert the audio contents of the received data together with the obtained attribute information into the superdistribution format data, so that the resultant data converted to the superdistribution data format is outputted and supplied to the external recording apparatus,

wherein said data transmission/receiving section includes a data read-out portion for reading the data out of a disc medium recorded with the data containing the audio contents and includes a network interface which receives the attribute information corresponding to the audio contents from an external server via a digital network, and

wherein said attribute information obtaining section obtains identification information read out of the disc medium and transmits the obtained information to the external server via the

digital network and receives attribute information corresponding to the audio contents recorded in the disc medium identified by the identification information from the external server.

23. (Previously Presented) The data conversion apparatus as claimed in claim 22 further comprising a data outputting section, wherein in a case where said data format judging section judges that the received data is of the superdistribution format, said controller controls said data outputting section so as to supply the received superdistribution format data to the external recording apparatus.

24. (Previously Presented) The data conversion apparatus as claimed in claim 23 further comprising: a recording section for recording the superdistribution format data; and

a charging section for executing a charging operation based on the charge condition of the attribute information,

wherein said controller controls said charging section so as to execute the charging operation of the superdistribution format data based on the charge condition of the attribute information when a copy of the superdistribution format data read out of said recording section is supplied to the external recording apparatus to be recorded therein.

25. (Canceled)

26. (Previously Presented) The data conversion apparatus as claimed in claim 22, wherein said attribute information obtaining section obtains the identification information of the disc medium by way of a user direct input operation.

27. (Previously Presented) The data conversion apparatus as claimed in claim 22, wherein said attribute information obtaining section obtains the identification information of the disc medium by extracting the number of pieces and reproduction time of the audio contents recorded in the disc medium.

28. (Previously Presented) The data conversion apparatus as claimed in claim 22, for use with an external charging device, wherein said network interface is connected to the external charging device via the digital network so that said charging section executes the charging operation based on the charge information in cooperation with the external charging device.

29-42. (Canceled)

43. (Previously Presented) A data conversion apparatus for use with an external recording apparatus and an external equipment, and for use in converting data including audio contents to superdistribution format data and outputting the superdistribution format data to be supplied to the external recording apparatus to be recorded therein,

said superdistribution format data including said audio contents and attribute information which represents at least a charge condition permitting creation of a copy of the audio contents, and including identification information identifying a user of the data conversion apparatus,

said data conversion apparatus comprising:

a data transmission/receiving means for transmitting and receiving data to and from the external equipment;

a data format judging means for judging whether or not data received by said data transmission/receiving means is of a superdistribution format;

an attribute information obtaining means for identifying the audio contents of the data and obtaining attribute information corresponding to the identified audio contents from the external equipment via said data transmission/receiving means;

a user ID storage means for storing the identification information identifying the user of the data conversion apparatus;

a ciphering means for ciphering the attribute information obtained from the external equipment and the identification information stored in said user ID storage means;

a data format conversion means for adding said ciphered attribute information and identification information to the audio contents and thereby converting the audio contents together with the obtained attribute information to the superdistribution data format; and

a controlling means for controlling said data transmission/receiving means, data format judging means, attribute information obtaining means and data format conversion means,

wherein, in a case where said data format judging means judges that the received data is not of the superdistribution format, said controlling means controls said attribute information obtaining means so as to obtain the attribute information corresponding to the audio contents from the external equipment, and wherein said controlling means controls said data format conversion means so as to convert the audio contents of the received data together with the obtained attribute information into the superdistribution format data, so that the resultant data converted to the superdistribution data format is outputted and supplied to the external recording apparatus,

wherein said data transmission/receiving means includes a data read-out portion for reading the data out of a disc medium recorded with the data containing the audio contents and includes a network interface which receives the attribute information corresponding to the audio contents from an external server via a digital network, and

wherein said attribute information obtaining means obtains identification information read out of the disc medium and transmits the obtained information to the external server via the digital network and receives attribute information corresponding to the audio contents recorded in the disc medium identified by the identification information from the external server.

44. (Previously Presented) The data conversion apparatus as claimed in claim 43, further comprising:

a data outputting means, wherein in a case where said data format judging means judges that the received data is of the superdistribution format, said controlling means controls said data

outputting means so as to supply the received superdistribution format data to the external recording apparatus.

45. (Previously Presented) The data conversion apparatus as claimed in claim 44, further comprising:

a recording means for recording the superdistribution format data; and

a charging means for executing a charging operation based on the charge condition of the attribute information,

wherein said controlling means controls said charging means so as to execute the charging operation of the superdistribution format data based on the charge condition of the attribute information when a copy of the superdistribution format data read out of said recording means is supplied to the external recording apparatus to be recorded therein.

46. (Previously Presented) The data conversion apparatus as claimed in claim 43, wherein said attribute information obtaining means obtains the identification information of the disc medium by way of a user direct input operation.

47. (Previously Presented) The data conversion apparatus as claimed in claim 43, wherein said attribute information obtaining means obtains the identification information of the disc medium by extracting the number of pieces and reproduction time of the audio contents recorded in the disc medium.

48. (Previously Presented) The data conversion apparatus as claimed in claim 43, for use with an external charging device, wherein said network interface is connected to the external charging device via the digital network so that said charging means executes the charging operation based on the charge information in cooperation with the external charging device.

49. (New) A data conversion method for use with an external recording apparatus and an external equipment, and for use in converting data including audio contents to superdistribution format data and outputting the superdistribution format data to be supplied to the external recording apparatus to be recorded therein,

said superdistribution format data including the audio contents and attribute information which represents at least a charge condition permitting creation of a copy of the audio contents, and including identification information identifying a user of a data conversion apparatus for use with said data conversion method,

said data conversion method comprising:

transmitting and receiving data to and from the external equipment;

judging whether or not the received data is of a superdistribution format;

identifying the audio contents of the received data and obtaining attribute information corresponding to the identified audio contents from the external equipment;

storing the identification information identifying a user of the data conversion apparatus;

ciphering the attribute information obtained from the external equipment and the stored identification information;

adding the ciphered attribute information and identification information to the audio contents and thereby converting the audio contents together with the obtained attribute information to the superdistribution data format; and

controlling said transmitting and receiving step, said judging step, said identifying and obtaining step, and said adding step,

wherein, in a case where said judging step judges that the received data is not of the superdistribution format, said controlling step comprises controlling said identifying and obtaining step so as to obtain the attribute information corresponding to the audio contents from the external equipment, and wherein said controlling step comprises controlling said adding step so as to convert the audio contents of the received data together with the obtained attribute information into the superdistribution format data, so that the resultant data converted to the superdistribution data format is outputted and supplied to the external recording apparatus,

wherein said transmitting and receiving step comprises reading the data out of a disc medium recorded with the data containing the audio contents and comprises receiving the attribute information corresponding to the audio contents from an external server via a digital network, and

wherein said identifying and obtaining step comprises obtaining identification information read out of the disc medium, transmitting the obtained information to the external server via the digital network, and receiving attribute information corresponding to the audio contents recorded in the disc medium identified by the identification information from the external server.

50. (New) The data conversion method as claimed in claim 49, further comprising outputting data, wherein in a case where said judging step judges that the received data is of the superdistribution format, said controlling step comprises controlling said data outputting step so as to supply the received superdistribution format data to the external recording apparatus.

51. (New) The data conversion method as claimed in claim 50, further comprising:
recording the superdistribution format data; and
executing a charging operation based on the charge condition of the attribute information,
wherein said controlling step comprises controlling said charging step so as to execute the charging of the superdistribution format data based on the charge condition of the attribute information when a copy of the superdistribution format data is supplied to the external recording apparatus to be recorded therein.

52. (New) The data conversion method as claimed in claim 49, wherein said identifying and obtaining step comprises obtaining the identification information of the disc medium by way of a user direct input operation.

53. (New) The data conversion method as claimed in claim 49, wherein said identifying and obtaining step comprises obtaining the identification information of the disc medium by

extracting the number of pieces and reproduction time of the audio contents recorded in the disc medium.

54. (New) The data conversion method as claimed in claim 49, for use with an external charging device, wherein the network interface is connected to the external charging device via the digital network so that the charging section executes the charging operation based on the charge information in cooperation with the external charging device.